

Germanic Language Histories 'from Below' (1700–2000)

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Eighteenth-century linguistic variation from the perspective of a Dutch diary and a collection of private letters*

1. Introduction

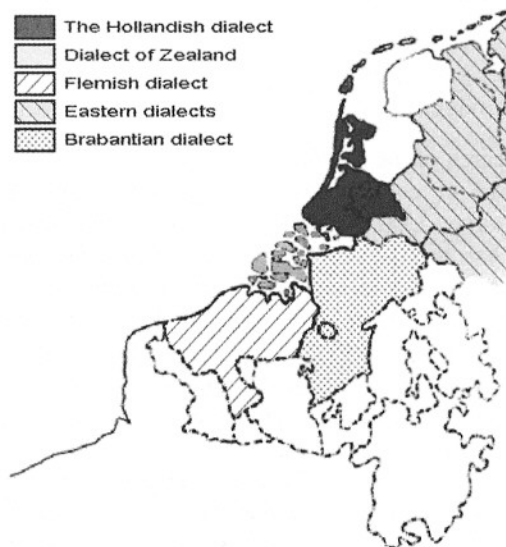
For decades, research of the Dutch standardization process has focused mainly on the first stage of codification and selection during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Less attention was paid to the subsequent eighteenth century, which has been considered a less remarkable period of linguistic consolidation. In this still widespread view of the eighteenth century, a more or less uniform written language is assumed to have developed as a result of successful micro-selection. In the following article, I will demonstrate that this view relies only on eighteenth-century printed sources. When 'ego documents' such as diaries and private letters are taken into account, a more complex linguistic reality of variation arises.

In sections 2 and 3, I will briefly discuss selection at the macro and micro levels in the Low Countries, questioning the accepted view on the eighteenth-century linguistic situation. After an introduction to the chosen sources (a diary and private letters) in sections 4 and 5, three morphological phenomena will be examined: diminutives (section 6), personal pronoun variation *mij/mijn* (section 7), and verbal variation (section 8). In section 9 evidence from the diary and the collection of private letters will be evaluated and some conclusions will be drawn.

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2. The standardization process: macro selection in the Low Countries

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Low Countries encompassed an area with various dialects. Leaving aside the French speaking provinces and Frisian speaking Friesland, the main Dutch speaking areas were Flanders, Brabant, Holland, and the eastern part of the Low Countries. The division into the southern dialects (both Flemish and Brabantian), the Hollandish dialect, and the eastern dialects is shown on map 1.



Map 1: Dialects in the Low Countries

Initially, in the second half of the sixteenth century, standardization took place in the South of the Low Countries as well as in the North. This is evident from early codification activities such as the *Nederlandsche Spellinghe* 'Dutch orthography' (1550), written and published by the printer Joos Lambrecht in the town of Ghent, in the South, and the first printed Dutch grammar, the *Twe-spraak vande Nederduitsche letterkunst* 'Dialogue of Dutch grammar' (1584), written by the Amsterdam Chamber of Rhetoric *In Liefde Bloeyende* and published in the town of Leiden, in the North. This joint standardization 'enterprise', however, was brought to an end by major political and economic developments. The wealthy South gradually lost its prosperity after the fall of Antwerp in 1585, when this main trade centre of the South finally succumbed to Spanish government. Holland, on the other hand, flourished and became

powerful and wealthy during the second half of the sixteenth century. Due to these well-known historical factors, the Dutch standard language developed in the northern part of the Low Countries, in Holland in particular. The eastern dialects barely contributed to the standard language, for, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, they had little or no prestige. For the southern dialects, this was different. The standard language comprised southern (Brabantian and Flemish) elements thanks to the influential written and printed language, which had exhibited southern characteristics for centuries. Another factor that may have strengthened the position of southern linguistic elements was the influence of a considerable number of immigrants who fled to the North after the fall of Antwerp. In the Northern towns, they were a prestigious group of merchants, scholars, printers, schoolmasters, etc.¹

This brief sketch of selection at macro level and of the external factors involved raises the question of the actual selection of competing variants, the so-called selection at micro level for the developing Dutch standard language.

3. Selection at micro level and eighteenth-century linguistic variation

Selection of variants takes place through the language usage of speakers and writers who avoid particular variants. As Stein (1994: 1) put it: "sorting out the variants"; a sorting out into "goodies" and "baddies", leading to a difference in prestige between standard and dialectal forms. This selection at micro-level becomes apparent in the Low Countries during the seventeenth century. By the eighteenth century, the Dutch standardization process had made considerable progress, and the written language shows the results of selection at micro level. Particular variants, still present in seventeenth-century texts, are not found in most eighteenth-century printed publications.

For many decades this view on the progress of standardization has led to a lack of interest in the eighteenth century, which was seen as a less remarkable period of both linguistic consolidation and elaborate prescriptivism. Yet this view needs to be questioned in various respects. Did the previous linguistic variation largely vanish from usage? Did literate people in everyday life write according to the norms of the preferred variants? These variants were mainly those from the province of Holland, in particular the variants of 'the well-

¹ Cf. Van der Wal (1995: 30–36). Doubt has been cast on both the influence of these southern immigrants and the southern influence in written language by Boyce and Howell (1996) and Van der Sijs (2004). Instead of southern influence, Van der Sijs assumes influence from German and the eastern dialects, a view that has been an issue of debate recently (cf. Van der Wal 2005).

educated in the towns and cities', whose language usage is repeatedly mentioned by contemporaries as exemplary for 'good Dutch'.² Did the usage of writers from various backgrounds show these preferred variants, or did large groups of native speakers still prefer other dialectal and sociolectal variants? Answers to these questions may be found in a particular kind of text material that may reveal an as yet under-researched area of the eighteenth-century linguistic usage. This study investigates both a diary and a recently published collection of private letters to present us with a more differentiated picture of eighteenth-century Dutch.

4. Sources for this study: a collection of private letters and a diary

In 2003 the historian Perry Moree published a collection of private letters that he had discovered in the Public Record Office London. This private correspondence is a collection of twenty letters addressed to Hermanus Kikkert (1749–1806), a sailor employed by the VOC (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie 'East Indian Company'). The letters were written by his wife, Aagje Luijtsen (1756–1797), who stayed behind on the island of Texel, the most northern part of the province of Holland. Hermanus and Aagje, both born and bred in Den Burg, the largest village on the island of Texel, were members of much respected, protestant families, and both were educated at the local primary school. Furthermore, Hermanus is believed to have received his nautical training in the town of Den Helder, leading to a successful career with the VOC fleet. A few months after his marriage to Aagje on June 2 1776, Hermanus sailed out as a navigating officer on a VOC ship heading for the East (Moree 2003:14ff.).

For the newly-weds, writing letters was the only way to keep in contact. That is what they did, and, fortunately, twenty of Aagje's letters, sent to her husband during his two voyages in the years 1776–1780, miraculously survived the turmoil of life at sea.³ These letters are little jewels not only for historians who appreciate first-hand information about daily life, but for

² Cf. the Dutch author and playwright Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679), who in 1650 explicitly mentions the spoken language of the well-educated in the towns of The Hague, the centre of government, and of Amsterdam, the centre of trade (Van der Wal 2004: 220). The Dutch linguist Lambert ten Kate (1674–1731) also points at the highest social groups ('de Deftigste[n]') for the best pronunciation (Ten Kate 1723, I: 146f.).

³ The letters received by Hermanus Kikkert were confiscated in an attack by English war ships at The Cape of Good Hope in 1781. They are kept in the High Court of Admiralty-Archive No-30 of The National Archives (TWA) in Kew (UK).

linguists as well. They are far from being brief notes full of standard formulae, clumsily written by a barely literate woman. On the contrary, Aagje, native speaker of the (Hollandish) dialect of the island of Texel, was a skilled writer who was able to express herself well in an informal style of writing. Her elaborate, intimate letters contain no more than a few standard formulae, in particular opening and closing phrases.

In addition to these interesting letters from the last quarter of the eighteenth century, I examined yet another source which might show linguistic variation. This second source was a diary written forty years earlier, in 1736, by two sisters from Zeeland who made a journey to Batavia in the company of their brother, an employee of the VOC. The two sisters, Maria (1709–1738) and Johanna (1713–1737) Lammens, were from a well-to-do protestant family of burgomasters in the province of Zeeland.⁴ The diary kept by the sisters during their voyage to Batavia is a lively report of daily life aboard. Apart from some recurrent participle constructions, the style of the diary can be characterized as informal.⁵

The Lammens sisters were familiar with the dialect of Zeeland, which shares quite a few characteristics with the southern dialects. It is important to note that the sisters did not write in their local dialect, but intended to write well, i.e. to write according to the developing standard variety.⁶ They seriously aimed at achieving that goal and doubt whether they had succeeded, when, at the end of the diary, they apologize for their style and orthography.

Although members of respected families, as females both Aagje Luytsen and the Lammens sisters must have received less education than did their male well-educated counterparts. Therefore, both by their education and by their local origin, they were quite different from the exemplary and well-educated inhabitants of the Hollandish towns and cities, and their writings constitute the kind of text material that could reveal evidence of non-standard linguistic variation not found in contemporary printed publications.⁷

⁴ The Lammens family moved from the village of Axel in the eastern part of Zeeland-Flanders to the town of Vlissingen where the sisters remained until the time of their departure to Batavia (Barend-Van Haeften 1996: 22–24).

⁵ The sisters' diary was preserved in a copy made by their brother Pieter (Barend-Van Haeften 1996: 27).

⁶ Cf. also Elspaß (2002: 47) and Vandenbussche (2002: 34f.), who have made this observation for nineteenth-century private letters. The 'intended standard language' was meant by the writers to function as standard language, but does not meet various standard language characteristics such as consistent spelling and grammatical correctness.

⁷ I am most grateful to both Marijke Barend-van Haaften and Perry Moree (and publisher Theo Timmer) for providing me with their electronic texts of the diary and the letters respectively.

5. Examples of linguistic variation

In order to assess whether the linguistic usage in the diary and the letters differs from that in printed publications, a sample of printed sources needs to be examined as well. As representatives of eighteenth-century printed sources, a description of a journey to an imaginary country and a selection of issues from a Dutch *Spectator* magazine were chosen. The *Beschryvinge van het magtig Koninkryk Krinke Kesmes* ('Description of the mighty kingdom of Krinke Kesmes'; 1708) was published by H. Smeeks (?–1721), a surgeon in the town of Zwolle. Justus van Effen (1684–1735), a journalist born in the town of Utrecht, was the editor and author of *De Hollandsche Spectator* (1731–1735), the successful Dutch imitation of Steele and Addison's *Spectator*.⁸

Although linguistic variation can be examined at the various levels of orthography, morphology, syntax and the lexicon, within the limits of this article I will focus chiefly on illustrative examples at the morphological level: diminutives (section 6), personal pronoun variation (section 7), and verbal variation (section 8). After having drawn conclusions at the morphological level, I will briefly touch upon variation at other levels in section 9.

6. The diminutives

In seventeenth-century texts, we find diminutive variation of the suffixes *-ken* and *-jen*. In his grammar of 1625, the Dutch grammarian Christiaen Van Heule even explicitly mentions this suffix variation as a dialect-bound phenomenon, and he himself shows preference for *-ken*:

Holland	<i>het mannetje, het wijffe, het diertje</i> 'little man, woman, animal'
Flanders	<i>het mannekjen, het wijfken, het dierkjen</i>
Brabant	<i>het manneken, het wijfken, het dierken</i>

Almost thirty years later, the grammarian Petrus Leupenius had to admit that *-jen* was far more usual than *-ken* (Van der Wal 1992: 123). The use of Brabantian *-ken* had decreased; *-ken* had given way to Hollandish *-jen*. Ultimately, for the standard language the diminutive *-je*, i.e. *-jen* with loss of final *n* was

⁸ Both publications are to be found in an on-line collection of Dutch texts, the DBNL (www.dbnl.org). I examined the whole of Smeeks (1708) (150 pages) and the following selection from the *Hollandsche Spectator*: the issues from May 26 till July 7, 1732 (pages 43–122), those from September 11 till October 5, 1733 (pages 45–106) and those from January 1 till February 12, 1734 (pages 287–374).

selected, and *-ken* was only maintained in archaic usage such as in the States Bible, the Dutch Authorized Version of the Bible, published in 1637. Apart from the diminutive variants mentioned by the grammarians Van Heule and Leupenius, yet another variant, the suffix *-ie*, occurred in the seventeenth century, a variant which had developed from the Hollandish diminutive *-jen* (*boekjen* -> *boekjie* -> *boekie* 'little book'; Van Loey 1964: 230). The *-ie*-diminutive was not accepted into the standard language; it was considered a colloquial, low variant alongside the current *-jen* and the high, archaic variant *-ken*.

Against the background of these seventeenth-century data, I examined, first of all, the two eighteenth-century printed texts. These appeared to reveal a remarkable uniformity: apart from one single instance of *-ken*, only the diminutive *-je(n)* is found, mostly with loss of final *n*, and neither text shows any sign of *-ie*.⁹

In 1736, i.e. about the same time as Van Effen's texts were published, the sisters Lammens do not use any *-ke(n)*-diminutive. In their diary we mainly find the *je*-suffix and its variants *-tje*/*-etje* in examples such as the following:¹⁰

copje 'little cup', *schuijtje* 'little boat', *koekjes* 'cookies'; *uurtje* 'little hour', *koeltje* 'gentle breeze', *maantje* 'little moon', *schoteltjes* 'little saucers', *voogeltjes* 'little birds'; *spulletjes* 'little things'.

The data look rather straightforward, but on closer examination they include a few remarkable instances:

- coptje* (4) versus regular *copje* (5) 'little cup'
- gebacktjes* (1) versus regular *gebakjes* (1) 'little pastries'
- steektje* (1) versus regular *steekje* (0) 'little stitch'
- stucktje* (1) versus regular *stuckje* (1) 'little piece'

The occurrence of the incorrect diminutives *coptje*, *gebacktjes*, *steektje*, *stucktje* (versus the correct diminutives *copje*, *gebakjes*, *steekje*, *stuckje*; cf.

⁹ Smeeks' only *-ken* instance is *steedeken* 'little town'. In Van Effen's texts *-ken* derivations do not occur apart from a lexicalized adverb *allengskens* 'gradually'. The original *-jen* occurs in a few of Smeeks' examples.

¹⁰ Note that the occurrence of the variants *-tje* and *-etje* depends on the phonetic context: *-tje* in the case of nasals and liquids preceded by a long vowel and in the case of a preceding unstressed syllable with a sjwa; *-etje* in the case of nasals and liquids preceded by a short vowel. Assimilation of *-tje* into *-je* is shown in four cases: *beesjes* (twice), *resje*, *nagje*.

footnote 10) demands explanation.¹¹ To explain these particular data, attention must be paid to another small set of data in the diary:

- ansjovisie* (1) 'little anchovy'
buurpratie (1) 'little chat, gossip'
mutsie (1) 'little cap'
ontbijtie (2) 'little breakfast'
plaetsie (1) 'little place'

These six instances can be seen as slips of the pen against the 130 instances of diminutive *-je* and its variants, but they undoubtedly show that the Lammens sisters were familiar with the *-ie* diminutive.¹² Returning to the earlier problem of the incorrect *-tje* diminutives, we may doubt whether the sisters mainly wrote what they actually spoke. I would assume that *coppie*, *stuckie* etc. was what they said in daily conversation but did not write down in their diary, knowing that the *-ie* variant was not acceptable. They wrote what they were taught to write and, apart from a few slips of the pen, applied the suffix *-tje*, in a few cases even hypercorrectly or incorrectly.

Aagje's letters offer a different picture. Apart from the suffix *-ke* in *Lamke*, the name for little Lammert, her son, we predominantly find diminutives spelled as *-ije*, e.g. the following nouns: *hartije* 'little heart', *livertije* 'darling', *lief schatije* 'darling', *kindertijes* 'little children', *pottije* 'little pot', *traantije* 'little tear', *winkeltije* 'little shop', *zieltije* 'little soul', and proper names such as *Aagije*, *Antije*, *Kikkertije*, *Naantije*.¹³ These diminutives sometimes alternate with *-je* (*hartje* 'little heart', *schatje* 'darling', *Aagje*) or with *-ie* (*Aagie*); the latter also occurs in *versie* 'little song', *huysie* 'little house', *Avie*, *Leysie*. An analysis of Aagje's orthography leads to the conclusion that the highly frequent spelling *-ije* is a variant of the spelling *-ie*.¹⁴ Therefore, the stigmatized diminutive *-ie* is found to be Aagje's usual suffix, and, in this respect, her usage differs considerably from both the diary and the printed sources.

¹¹ The diminutive *stormtje*, which occurs twice in the diary and differs from the modern Dutch *stormpje*, is assumed to be a regular form in the Zealand dialect of the eighteenth century (Magda Devos (Ghent): personal communication). The variation *speenvarkje* (1) versus *varktje* (1) is also found in the diary.

¹² In two cases the *-ie* diminutives alternate with the *-je* diminutives in the diary: *visjes* (2) 'little fishes' and (*buur*)*praetje* (2).

¹³ The proper name *Lamke* occurs seven times against a single occurrence of *Lammertije*.

¹⁴ The *ij*-token likewise represents an *i*-spelling in words such as *huijs*, etc. Aagje's letters offer a wealth of diminutives: apart from the proper names, 180 instances of the *ije*-diminutives occur (against only 19 *-je*-diminutives).

For the diminutives we may conclude that both the Lammens sisters from Zealand and Aagje from Texel are familiar with the Hollandish diminutive *-ie*, a diminutive that does not occur in the printed publications examined. The Lammens sisters may have been well aware of the low status of the *ie*-variant in the written standard language: they mainly write *je/(t)je*, even hyper-correctly. Aagje, on the other hand, does not hesitate at all to write *ije/ie*: it is her most frequently used diminutive.

7. *mij/mijn* variation

The second case to be discussed is variation *mij* versus *mijn*. In northern Dutch of the seventeenth century, the first person pronoun *ik* (subject) occurs in the object forms *mij* and *mijn*. The form *mijn*, which is still preserved in some Dutch dialects, belongs to the dialect of the province of Holland. Ultimately, *mijn* was not accepted into the standard language and the form has disappeared from the educated written language. Seventeenth-century grammarians do not comment on this variation, but the translators of the States Bible do. In order to decide which variant among the competing forms should be used for the Bible translation, they discussed various questions of language and made a note on *mijn*. This variant was rejected as being low or too colloquial: “nunquam *myn*, ut vulgus hic loquitur” (‘never use *mijn* as the lower class people do’) was their opinion (Van der Wal 1992: 124).

The stigmatized object form *mijn*, which also occurred in prepositional phrases, is clearly present in Aagje’s letters, which show about 55% *mijn* versus 45% *mij*. Even quoting from the Bible, Aagje writes *mijn*: “ik zal *mijn* buijgen na het paleis Uwer heijligheijd” (‘I will bow [myself] towards the palace of your holiness’, Ps. 5:8; emphasis added). In the diary of the Lammens sisters, however, we find no examples of *mijn*, nor does Smeeks’ book offer any *mijn*-instances.¹⁵ The only two examples to be found in Van Effen’s *Spectator* are, on closer examination, remarkable ones:

- (1) de oudst [...] ruim twintig jaar *met myn* en men Vrouw verscheelt
‘the oldest differs from me and my wife more than twenty years in age’
(emphasis added)
- (2) [...] afgronten die *myn* zyn aangedaan
‘offences done to me’ (emphasis added).

¹⁵ The only example of *mijn* in Smeeks’ book (page 80 *dat [...] hy mijn altijd Gods-kind noemde* ‘that he always called me a child of God’) may be safely discounted. Inspection of the copy of the original (UBL 1496G21: 1) has shown that this line does not preserve its original type-setting.

The first instance occurs in a quotation from an elderly man's conversation and the second one in an imaginary letter to the editor, texts which both show various characteristics of spoken language.

The evidence from Smeeks' book and Van Effen's texts reveals not only the absence of *mijn* from eighteenth-century printed and standard written language, but also its survival in spoken language. From that perspective, the absence of *mijn* in the diary raises a few questions. Did the Lammens sisters avoid the *mijn*-variant, knowing that it was considered too colloquial? Or were they not familiar with the *mijn*-variant in their Zeeland dialect? The latter appears not to be the case: the *mijn* personal pronoun occurred in the Zeeland dialect as well as in the Hollandish dialect.¹⁶ The Lammens sisters must therefore have deliberately avoided *mijn* and chosen the acceptable *mij* variant. For Aagje Luijtsen, however, *mijn* is not an improper variant to be discarded in written language, but a variant on a par with *mij*.

8. Verbal variation

Apart from the nominal and pronominal variation discussed above, verbal morphological variation occurs both in the letters and in the diary. Aagje's letters show, for instance, verbal variants such as *ic/hij gong* 'went' (versus regular *ging*), *stong*, *sting* 'stood' (versus regular *stond*), *ic gaen*, *doen*, *sien* 'I go, do, see' (versus regular *ga*, *doe*, *sie*). In the diary both *gong* and *vong* 'caught' (versus regular *ving*) are found, variants that occur in the printed sources as well, cf. Table 1.

The numbers in the table should be interpreted against the frequency of the other, 'regular' alternatives. Against Smeeks' single instance of *gong* and Van Effen's two instances, 88 and 22 instances of *ging* respectively occur.¹⁷ The verb *vangen* itself is less frequently used: Smeeks' two instances of *vongen* occur versus six of *vingen*; Van Effen only shows two instances of *ving*. The variations *moet/mot*, *moeten/motten*, *moest(en)/most(en)*, still present in seventeenth-century texts, do not occur in Van Effen's publications. In Smeeks' book, six instances are found, all of them *most* (*ik/ men most*), versus 163 instances of *moest*. It is striking that the *most* variant is a frequent phenomenon in Aagje's letters too (28 instances versus 2 instances of *moest*), whereas her present tense and infinitive forms show no variation at all (151

¹⁶ Cor van Bree (Leiden): personal communication.

¹⁷ Interference between the verbs *gaan*, *staan*, *vaan/vangen* led to the variants *sting* (cf. regular *ging*, *ving*), *vong* and *gong* (cf. *stong/stond*) (cf. Van Loey 1964: 178). Both Smeeks and Van Effen even each show a single instance of *hong* 'hang'.

instances of *moet(en)* versus not a single instance of *mot(ten)*). In the diary only the 'regular' variants *moet(en)*, *moest(en)* occur.

Verbal variants	printed text Smeeks	printed text Van Effen	private text Lammens	private text Aagje Luijtsen
<i>gong</i>	1	2	5	1
<i>stong, sting</i>	-	-	-	2
<i>vong</i>	2	-	3	-
<i>ic gaen</i> ¹⁸	-	-	-	3
<i>ic doen</i>	-	-	-	5
<i>ic sien</i> ¹⁹	-	-	-	2
<i>mot, motten</i>	-	-	-	-
<i>most/mosten</i>	6	-	-	28

Table 1: Verbal variants

We conclude that in all four sources the verbal variants discussed are marginal phenomena, with the one exception of *most(en)*. There is a striking difference between the present and infinitive on the one hand and the preterite on the other. The preterite *most*, which still occurs in Smeeks' book, is even the most frequent variant in Aagje's letters.

9. Reflection and conclusions

From the cases discussed, we can see that variants such as the diminutive suffix *-ie* and the personal pronoun *mijn* had disappeared from printed sources by the eighteenth century but occurred frequently in Aagje's letters. The diary has a position somewhere in between: from the data in the diary, we get the impression that the Lammens sisters aimed at avoiding these colloquial variants, but without succeeding in all respects. The verbal variation is more complex. *Mot, motten* appears to be absent in all four sources, whereas the preterite *most/mosten* still occurs in Smeeks' book and even appears to be Aagje's usual variant. The Lammens sisters, however, stick to the *moeten/moesten* variants.

The results of our examination at the morphological level clearly illustrate that both Aagje's private letters and the diary of the Lammens sisters show a linguistic reality richer and more complex than the picture based on printed

¹⁸ Apart from these forms the imperative *gaan* and the first person plural present *wij gaanen* also occur. Similar instances of the verb *staan* (*ic staen*) are not found in any of the four sources.

¹⁹ Apart from this form the infinitive *sienen* occurs as well.

sources. These findings, which I could have extended to the phonological, syntactical, and lexical level as well, once more prove the value of ego documents for linguistic research. Having said this, a caveat should be made as well. We have to realize that not all diaries or private correspondences are equal, and the value of their data should be determined in each case. This means establishing in what respects these ego documents represent the actual spoken language. In Aagje's letters we indeed find the reflex of the contemporary spoken language. For instance, particular spellings such as *begreijpe* 'to understand' indicate that the final *n* of infinitives was not pronounced. Her spelling also suggests that many French loans were adopted by conversation and not by reading. Compare the following quotations from Aagje's letters:²⁰

- (3) Mar ik zijn met Leijs en Aavei heele *vammeljare* vrindinne
'but I am very familiar friends with Leijs and Aavei'
(*vammeljare* = *familiare* 'familiar')
- (4) Sijmon Kikkert is bij *sikkertaares* vandaan
'Sijmon Kikkert went away from the secretary'
(*sikkertaares* = *secretaris* 'secretary')
- (5) ik *vielesteere..!* ik *fielsseteer!* *feleseteer* u
'I congratulate you'
(*vielesteere!* *fielsseteer!* *feleseteer* = *feliciteer* 'congratulate')

Particular syntactic patterns of the letters also reflect the spoken language, such as the repetition of the subject *Heijn van der Markt* by the demonstrative *die* in (6) and the *noun* + *possessive pronoun* + *noun* pattern to express the possessive in (7):²¹

- (6) Heijn van der Markt *die* wagt der na
'Heijn van der Markt (he) waits for it'
- (7) ik heb een brief van *de captijn zijn vrouw* gehad
'I got a letter from the captain his wife/ the captain's wife'

These orthographical and syntactical examples, however, should not obscure the fact that ego documents may not only reflect the spoken language, but also the language taught. In order to understand the earlier morphological results, in particular those of the diary, we have to bear in mind that the writers of diaries and letters were taught to write a developing standard language and, therefore,

²⁰ To these examples I could easily add many from the diary of the Lammens sisters, who used much more French vocabulary than Aagje did, and who likewise show a deviant orthography. Cf. also Stroop (1997: 194ff.).

²¹ For similar syntactic patterns in German letters written by 'ordinary people' cf. Elspaß (2005).

to avoid dialectal or sociolectal unacceptable variants. It is not only highly probable that people were instructed, during their primary or secondary school education, to avoid unacceptable linguistic variants. Convincing evidence of this can be found in a little eighteenth-century dictionary, written about 1730 by an anonymous schoolmaster from The Hague and published in 1780 (Van der Wal 1994; Kloeke 1938). Aiming at correcting so-called street language, the author of the dictionary lists all kinds of stigmatized pronunciations, among which we find the verbal forms *most*, *mot*, *motten* (preferred variants: *moest*, *moet*, *moeten*) and nouns such as *sikkertaris* (preferred variants: *geheimschryver*, *secretaris*). This particular publication is convincing proof of an undoubtedly more widespread practice in the Netherlands.

Private letters and diaries reflect actual usage on the one hand and the taught written language on the other, and a thorough analysis is therefore needed to disentangle both elements. It is the rewarding analysis of private documents such as these that reveals a more diverse picture of the eighteenth-century linguistic situation than we had to date. Such a diverse picture must underpin a history of the Dutch language that describes the complex standardization process and pays attention to language change from above as well as from below.²²

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²² When describing language history, we must be aware of the ambiguity of the notions *change from above* and *change from below*, as David Denison rightly points out in this volume. The ambiguity between a change driven by systematic factors below or above the level of conscious awareness and a change initiated by those lower down or higher up the social scale needs to be taken into account.

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